



AmeriCorps
Montana

2021 ServeMontana Symposium

Virtual Presentation/Presenter Guidance

Preparation:

- Use a simple background to minimize distractions
- Dress as if you were hosting this presentation in person
 - Use your own office standards of professional address – whether that means trousers or jeans, blazer or AmeriCorps sweatshirt!
 - Please keep in mind that, while you are presenting from home, your lower half may be visible should you need to hop up from the computer to answer the door, kennel the dog, etc.
- Set “Meeting Rules” at start of presentation. Questions to get you started:
 - Do you want attendees to ask questions during the presentation, or hold until the end?
 - Will attendees type questions in the chat box, or ask live? Should they use the raise hand function?
 - Should they introduce themselves before asking a question?
- Create an agenda and stick to it
 - This respects attendees time and needs
 - Structure will help the presentation run smoothly, even if some issues arise
 - Leave a few minutes as a “buffer” in case of technical difficulties; if you don’t experience technical problems, you have extra Q&A time!
- Keep any presentation slides simple
 - Slide wordiness can be overwhelming for audiences in-person and in virtual settings
 - Use less text and a larger font size
 - Some people may be tuning in from phones/tablets with smaller screens
 - Provide your audience with a handout through the Whova platform
- Keep your presentation audience-centric
 - Who is your audience?
 - What are they hoping to take away from your presentation?
 - How can you generate greater meaning for your audience?
- Consult with your facilitator
 - Ensure your facilitator knows your Meeting Rules and has a copy of your agenda and presentation
 - The facilitator will monitor the chat, look for raised hands, etc. so you can focus on the audience and your presentation
- Rehearse
 - Rehearse with your facilitator – rally some friends to act as your audience members for practice runs

- Record your practice runs so you can perform a self-assessment
- Brainstorm technical difficulties, then prepare and rehearse Plans A and B

Technical:

- Ensure strong/reliable internet connection
 - Use an ethernet cable, if possible
 - Set up in a location where you know you will have reliable internet connection if using wi-fi
- Plug in your computer to a power source before presenting and leave it throughout the presentation
- Remove distractions
 - Turn off computer notifications and close any irrelevant applications
 - Put your cell phone into “Do Not Disturb” or “Airplane” mode.
- Make sure your audio is reliable and clear
 - Consider an external microphone if using your computer microphone results in low-quality audio for your attendees
- Present yourself in a good light (literally)
 - Ensure you are clearly visible to the audience
 - Give yourself good front lighting so your face is visible
 - Place yourself close enough to the camera that your facial expressions are clear
- Look into your camera, not at the screen or other participants
 - Place your camera at your eye-level to make it as easy as possible to maintain “eye contact” with your audience
 - Your facilitator can watch for audience questions, etc.
- Place any notes directly behind the camera
 - You won’t break “eye contact” as frequently
 - Something like a music stand, tablet stand, or cookbook holder would work great
- Maintain good posture while delivering your presentation
 - Standing can help keep your energy levels higher, which will help attendees to remain engaged with you
- Focus on just a couple virtual presentation tools
 - Using too many virtual tools can overwhelm your audience and distract from the content of your presentation
 - Make sure you are an expert with whichever tools you choose to utilize
 - Practice using those tools with your moderator/additional facilitators
 - Use more than one mode of interaction with your attendees to help keep them engaged
 - Try to only use one mode at a time for simplicity
 - Designate points throughout your presentation to change to a different mode
 - Have a back-up plan to continue your session quickly and smoothly in case of technical difficulty
- If using a cursor to point to items on the screen, be sure to move it slowly
 - There is often connection lag-time between your screen and what your audience sees
 - If you move the cursor too quickly, your audience may not be able to follow

Engagement and Facilitation:

- Start with a welcome activity, even if it is just a quick poll

- Sets the expectation of audience engagement
 - Connects you with your audience
- Transition from the welcome activity to the presentation with a good hook
- Check in with attendees; build their trust from the start of your presentation
- Try to facilitate an experience *with* your audience instead of talking *at* them
- Engage attendees every ~5-10 minutes by:
 - Using one or two tools such as the chat box, inviting vocal participation, polls, quizzes, breakout rooms, etc.
 - Speaking directly to an audience member or asking the audience to “imagine if...”
 - Changing presenter (if you have a co-presenter)
- Make space in your presentation to allow all attendees to participate, if applicable and feasible
 - Feasibility is dependent on number of attendees
 - Use your facilitator to ensure and encourage diverse involvement
- Consider breakout groups as a means of facilitating group discussions and engagement throughout your presentation
 - Try “Think, Pair, Share”:
 - Pose a question to your audience
 - Split them into small breakout groups
 - Have them discuss the question/their answers in their small breakout room for a limited time
- Ensure attendees speak one at a time if using audio for Q&A
 - Call on attendees by name
 - Allow attendees to ask their entire question; avoid interrupting (remember the lag-time), and encourage other attendees not to interrupt one another
 - If your audience is small enough, ask attendees to choose next speaker, “popcorn style”
 - Rely on the facilitator/moderator to call on people

Finally:

- *Have fun and be yourself!* 😊

Sources/Additional Resources

[Webinar: Improve your Virtual Presentation Skills](#)

[Article/Video: Ways to Look and Sound Better on Zoom-Georgetown University](#)

[Article: Tips for Virtual Presentations-Stanford Graduate School of Business](#)

[Article: Best Practices for Virtual Presentations-Forbes](#)

[Article: Tips for Facilitating a Virtual Workshop-Community Builders](#)

[Article: Ways to Make Online Presentations Pop- The Enterprisers Project](#)